Illinois Early Learning Council

January 23, 2006

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. 160 N. LaSalle, Bilandic Building, Room N-502, Chicago

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ann Alvarez, Martha Arntson, Lori Baas, Barbara Bowman (for Arne Duncan), Mary Ellen Caron, George Davis, Mark Donahue, Martina Casey, Vinni Hall, Emily Harris (for Adele Simmons), Kay Henderson, Grace Hou (for Carol Adams), Judy Johnson, Lanita Koster, Janet Maruna, Mark McHugh, Cordelia Meyer, Harriet Meyer, Janice Moenster, Cynthia Moreno (for Bryan Samuels), Claudia Quigg, Barbara Quinn (for Gayla Boomer), Elliot Regenstein, Linda Saterfield (for Carol Adams), Ralph Schubert (for Carol Adams), Sarah Slaughter, Luz Maria Solis, Jerry Stermer, Sheridan Turner, Jackie Vaughn (for Barry Maram), Judy Walker Kendrick, Maria Whelan, Kay Willmoth (for Joyce Thomas)

Absent: Ellen Alberding, Guy Alongi, Constance Brown, Representative Elizabeth Coulson, Claudia Fabian, Marilu Galan, Phyllis Glink, Representative Deborah Graham, Senator Don Harmon, Richard Jones, James Kaplan, Trinita Logue, Maureen Marx, Samuel Meisels, Senator Carol Ronen, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Leo Smith, Eric Whitaker

• Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m. by Harriet Meyer.

• Adoption of Minutes

Harriet Meyer asked that the Council approve minutes from the previous meeting. Barbara Bowman moved to adopt the October 3, 2005 Early Learning Council meeting minutes. Lanita Koster seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

• Preschool Expansion Plan Update

Elliot Regenstein reported that the Governor will identify his plan for continued preschool expansion in the coming weeks, either as a stand-alone announcement or as part of his budget address. Elliot stated that he believes the plan will reflect the work and priorities of the Early Learning Council and asked for members' support when it is announced. He stated that, although it is doubtful the funding request will be the amount arrived at in the Preschool For All planning process, it will be a sum that will provide the system with substantial funds to begin to roll out the Council's highest priorities. He indicated substantive legislation will be introduced during this legislative session. Lanita Koster asked for information regarding the Illinois State Board of Education's budget recommendation, and Elliot informed her that the Board asked for \$30 million new dollars for early childhood programs.

• Progress to Date on Approved Council Recommendations

Elliot Regenstein asked members to review the written Recommendations Action Report for a summary of all current work. Formal verbal updates were provided on the following initiatives:

- 1). Emily Harris presented information on the web-based interactive maps of birth to five services. The Early Childhood Asset Map group is partnered with the University of Illinois Early Childhood Parent Cooperative to create a publicly accessible database of the capacity of, and need for, early childhood programs in Illinois. She stated that the University of Illinois has committed \$10,000 to these efforts, and grant proposals for further funding are currently outstanding. She reported that \$150,000 in funding is needed to complete the project.
- 2). Linda Saterfield reported that the Child Care Assistance Program full-time option pilot will not begin until Fiscal Year 2007 because of unresolved MIS needs. She stated that the policies and procedures for the full-time pilots have been created, and that Carterville and Springfield are the communities that have been selected for the pilot program.
- 3). Linda Saterfield reported that the same MIS issues will also keep the Child Care Assistance Program grant funding pilot from beginning before the start of FY07. Again, all the program-related documents have been created, but the pilot program will be tabled until the necessary changes to the Child Care Assistance Program database are made.
- 4). Linda Saterfield stated that the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) agreement for a rate increase for licensed and license-exempt family child care providers was ratified last weekend. She reported that the agreement included a 39 month contract that would yield an average increase of 30% over three years. She reported that the rate increases will vary by geographic location and the age of the child served, and added that age classifications for rates will be changed for family child care providers. The new age categories will be: birth to 2, 2 years, and 3 to 5 years. Tiered reimbursements will begin in the second year of the agreement, based on the tiered reimbursement recommendations of the Child Care Development Advisory Council and the Rates Report, and health plans will be offered in the third year. Maria Whelan reminded members that SEIU negotiated on behalf of family child care providers, and that center-based programs are not included in this rate increase. She stated that advocates are working to ensure parity for center-based providers, and that they will be meeting with representatives of the Governor's Office for Management and Budget to include the funding for a center-based rates increase in the FY07 state budget. Martha Arntson asked what the average increase per child would be in the first year; Maria Whelan replied that it varies from an average increase in April of 10% to upwards of 30% for programs in the geographic group 2. Linda reported the Child Care Assistance Program will release a new rate structure soon. Judy Walker Kendrick urged the Council to note the severity of the need for MIS services, reminding members that the Child Care Advisory Council went on record concerning this need.

Revisit Tabled Recommendations from October 2005 meeting

1). Harriet Meyer asked that the Executive Committee recommendation for a policy statement on the importance of supporting existing birth to five programs through annual

cost of living adjustments be tabled until the Early Learning Council meeting in May. She cited the Department of Human Services' work on the Child Care Assistance Program rate increase and recommended that the Council table the policy statement until the rates increase is negotiated and the state budget is announced.

2). Harriet also reported that the Executive Committee met and discussed feedback from focus groups of Early Childhood Block Grant recipients regarding the 5% cap on administrative costs in program budgets. The group concluded that the issue of changing the way some staff position salary and benefits are budgeted could be addressed directly with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Harriet and Elliot Regenstein agreed to work with ISBE on this issue, and will meet with ISBE representatives before the Request For Proposals for FY07 is issued.

• Getting Ready for Preschool For All

Dr. Linda Gilkerson and Gaylord Geiske presented information on the Children's Mental Health Partnership.

Dr. Linda Gilkerson's presentation provided a context for young children's social emotional development and how it relates to school readiness. She discussed the real threats to young children's mental health, the availability of intervention and treatment services, and the role of early care and education programs.

Gaylord Gieseke presented on the priorities of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership's Early Childhood Committee. The Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 formed the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership under the Governor's Office and charged it with developing a plan to reform the Illinois children's mental health system. In June 2005, the Partnership published its *Strategic Plan for Building a Comprehensive Children's Mental Health System in Illinois*. The plan envisions a comprehensive, coordinated children's mental health system comprised of prevention, intervention and treatment for children birth to eighteen. The Partnership has formed the Early Childhood Committee to address the needs of expecting families and children birth to five. The committee developed recommendations that were included in the Partnership's strategic plan. For more information about the Partnership's history, key findings, priorities and recommendations, please visit the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority website for the executive summary or full report www.ivpa.org/childrensmhtf.

Because there were no formal recommendations from the committees to bring before the Council, Elliot asked committee chairs to voice issues they are working on to solicit input from all Council members.

1). Jerry Stermer, co-chair of the Linkage and Integration committee, asked members to comment on the success and challenges early childhood programs are currently facing in providing services to recent immigrants and children and families who speak languages other than English. He reported that this information will help to inform the committee as they look at ensuring that the entry points into programs are readily accessible for all families. Kay Wilmoth cited the General Accounting Office study of English language learners' access to early childhood programs as evidence that Congress is also concerned about this issue. She stated that representatives from the study team will visit Illinois to

gather data on access to Head Start and child care collaboration programs. George Davis observed that Head Start programs are doing well in reaching and enrolling immigrant children and families and children and families who speak languages other than English, but cited difficulty in helping families to access other necessary services (example-medical services for families without private insurance or Medicaid). He stated that Head Start's ability to pay for needed services for families without other resources will most likely be curtailed by shrinking budgets and increasing numbers of families in need. He also reminded members that bilingual teachers are in short supply. Ann Alvarez added she believes that a pay differential for bilingual teachers is necessary to retain qualified staff. She also mentioned the difficulty many families have affording full day care for their children. Barbara Bowman stated that early childhood programs are not doing enough to serve immigrant and linguistic minority families, in great part because programs do not have enough physical space to accommodate children. Mary Ellen Caron agreed, saying that many community-based organizations express interest in serving children in high-need areas, but cannot find space to house their programs. She reported evidence of this difficulty in Chicago Housing Authority relocation areas as well as areas with large numbers of immigrant and linguistic minority families. Jerry asked Elliot Regenstein whether funding would be available in the capital plan for community-based organizations that collaborate with public schools. Elliot answered that requests have been backlogged (FY02 requests are currently being filled) and any new requests will be addressed only after the backlog is cleared. Sara Slaughter urged the Linkage and Integration committee to investigate working with the Erikson Institute Center for Research and Policy, as they are looking at immigrant families' access to early childhood education.

2). On behalf of the Workforce Development committee, co-chair Dea Meyer asked Kay Henderson how the committee might be able to work with ISBE regarding the requiring of specific credentials for early childhood program administrators. She stated that no requirements for administrative staff were added to the new Early Childhood Block Grant rules, approved by ISBE on January 19, 2006. Kay responded that any subsequent changes to the rules need to go through a legal process for creation, review and approval. Vinni Hall stated that rules documents are dynamic, and should change as ideas arise. Dea reiterated her committee's desire to work alongside ISBE to advance the work of the Council.

• Revised 2006 ELC Meeting Schedule and Wrap-Up

Elliot Regenstein reviewed changes in the Early Learning Council Schedule for 2006. All meetings will be held at 160 N. LaSalle, Room N505, Chicago.

New meeting dates and times:

May 8, 2006 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. September 18, 2006 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Cancelled meeting dates and times: July 24, 2006 and October 23, 2006.

Elliot Regenstein adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.